

Documenting a Nation's Turbulent Past: Archives in Uganda

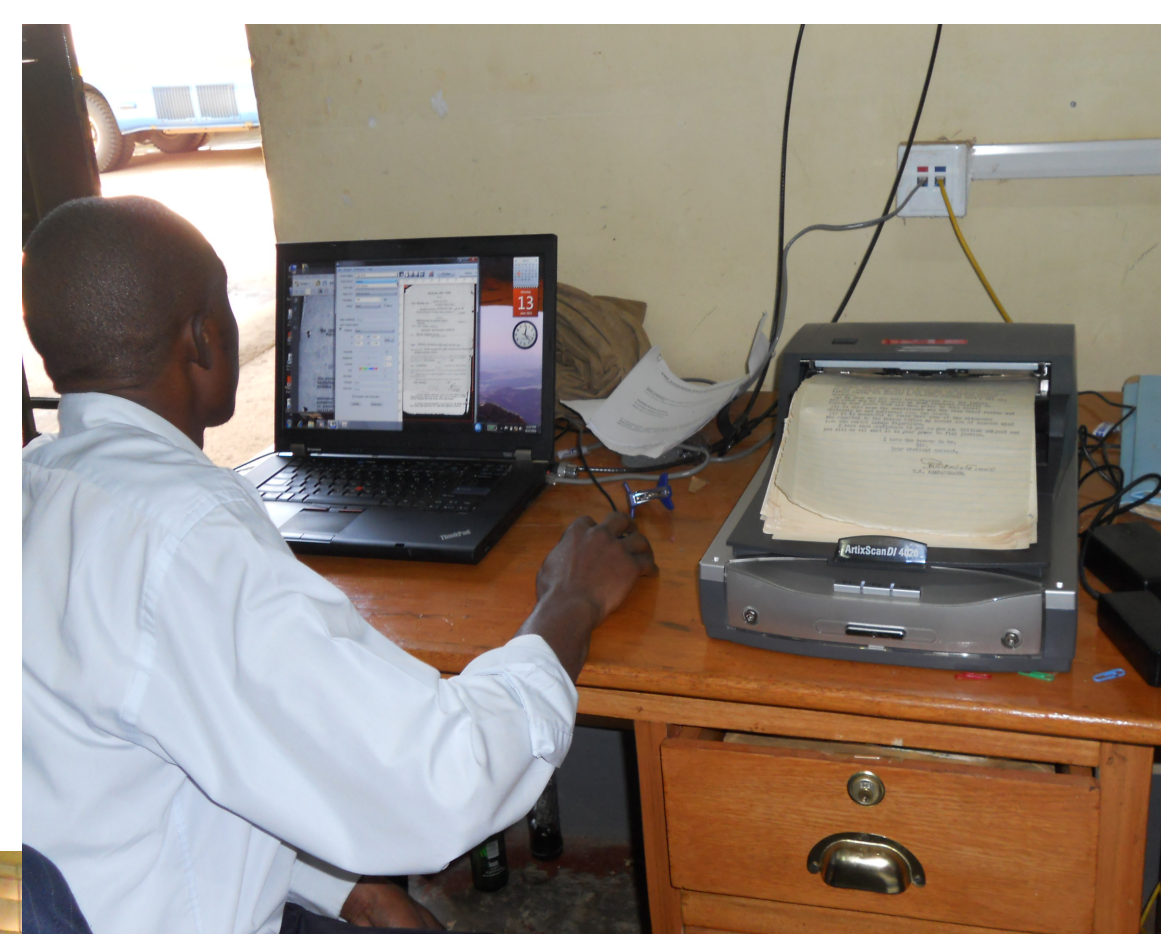
Natalie Bond, University of Michigan

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Kabarole District Archives – Fort Portal, Uganda

Project Scope: Preservation & Digitization

Arriving in Fort Portal in June 2011 with new scanning equipment (MicroWizardDI scanner & Lenovo Thinkpad laptop) purchased with University of Michigan funding, I trained the archival employees in the basics of digital preservation. I developed a basic digital preservation strategy, in addition to writing a collections development policy for the archive, in an effort to facilitate the long-term preservation of the material.



Moses Akugizibwe scanning documents

- MicroWizardDI Scanner
- Lenovo Thinkpad laptop
- TIFF images
- 300 DPI
- Group IV compression



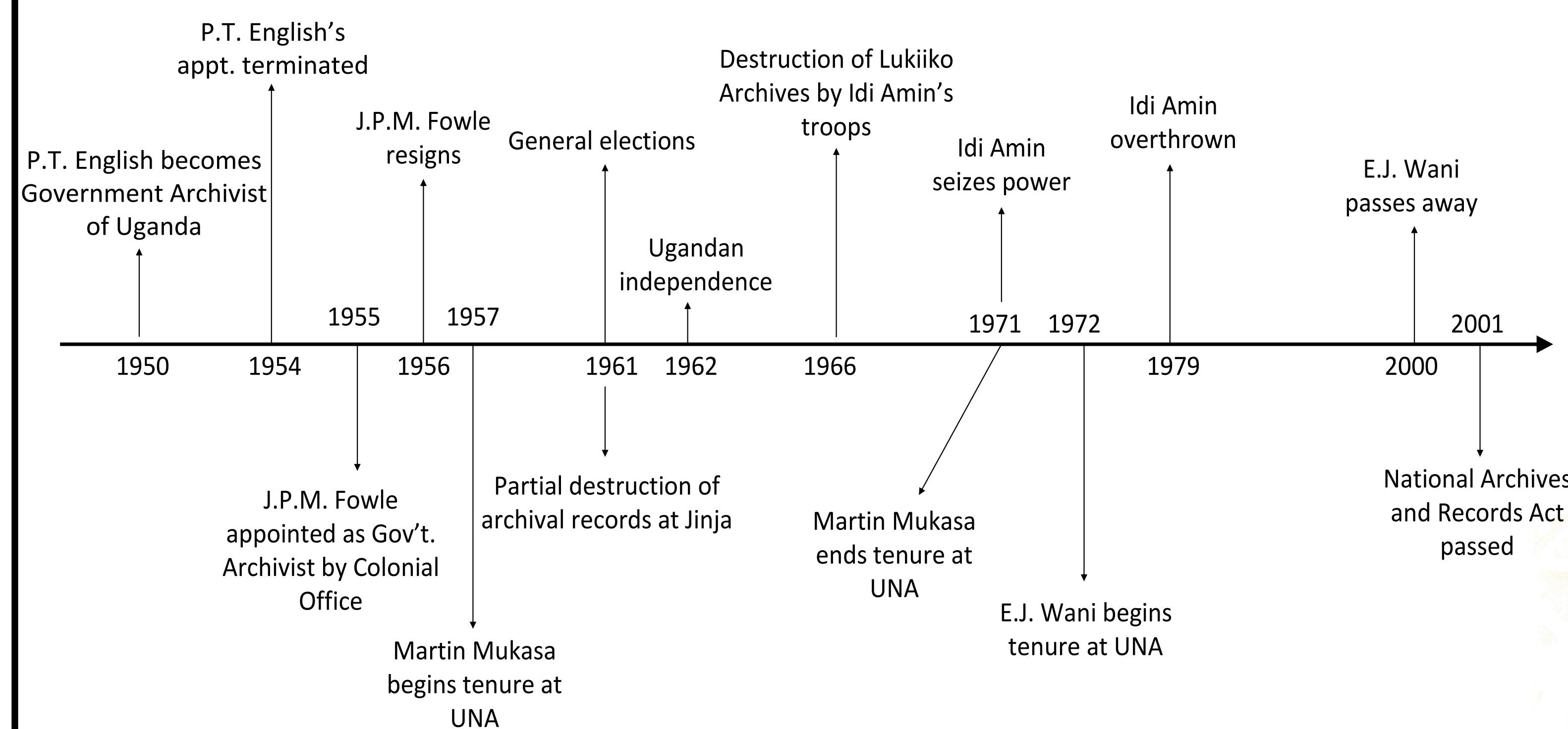
Processing room, Kabarole District Archives

Stacks, Kabarole District Archive

Methodology

- Initial physical assessment of collections
- Equipment set-up
- Digital preservation training (scanning protocol, organizational schema, implementation of best practices for the preservation of digital formats)
- Meetings with stakeholders (Chief Administrative Officer of Kabarole District, MMU Vice Chancellor)

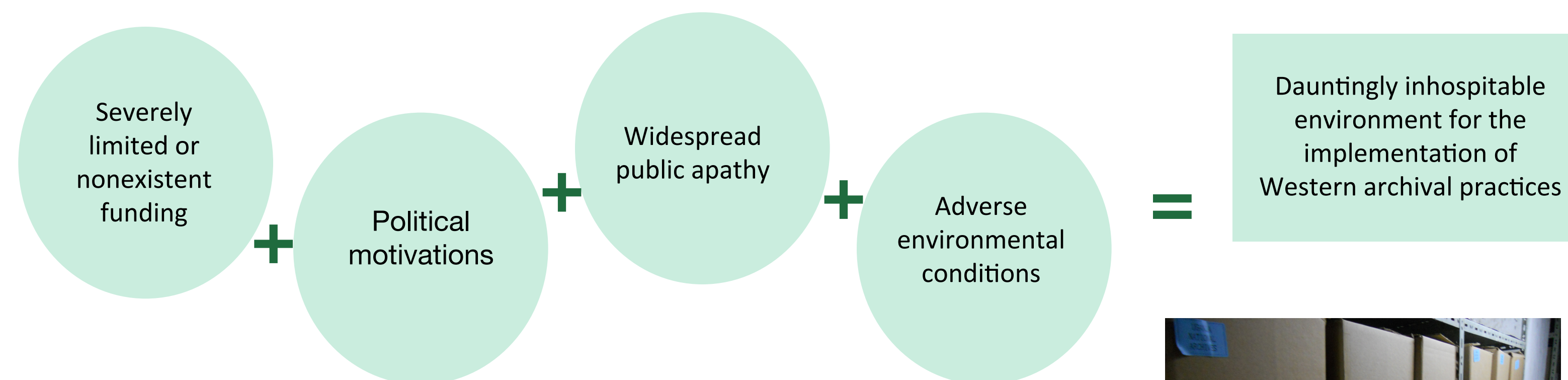
Uganda's Archives: A Brief History



Uganda's written record begins with the introduction of British rule in the late 1800's, and indeed the earliest documents in the Uganda National Archive date to the early 1890's. Despite organizational and institutional changes within the British colonial administration over the years, a cohesive administrative record was maintained by civil servants. Throughout the turbulence of the following decades, the Uganda National Archives persisted in spite of both episodes of deliberate destruction by both British and Ugandan officials and the negligence of a nation torn asunder by violence and cultural dissidence.

Archival Practices in Developing Countries: Political Dexterity and A Bit of Creativity

Uganda's archival landscape is, to some extent, representative of current archival practices—and in some cases, lack thereof—in many other developing countries throughout the world:



What's at stake?

- Issues of control and access to archival collections
- Status of archival education in Uganda
- Social memory traditions, grounded in Ugandan perceptions of the past



Newly-processed materials at the UNA

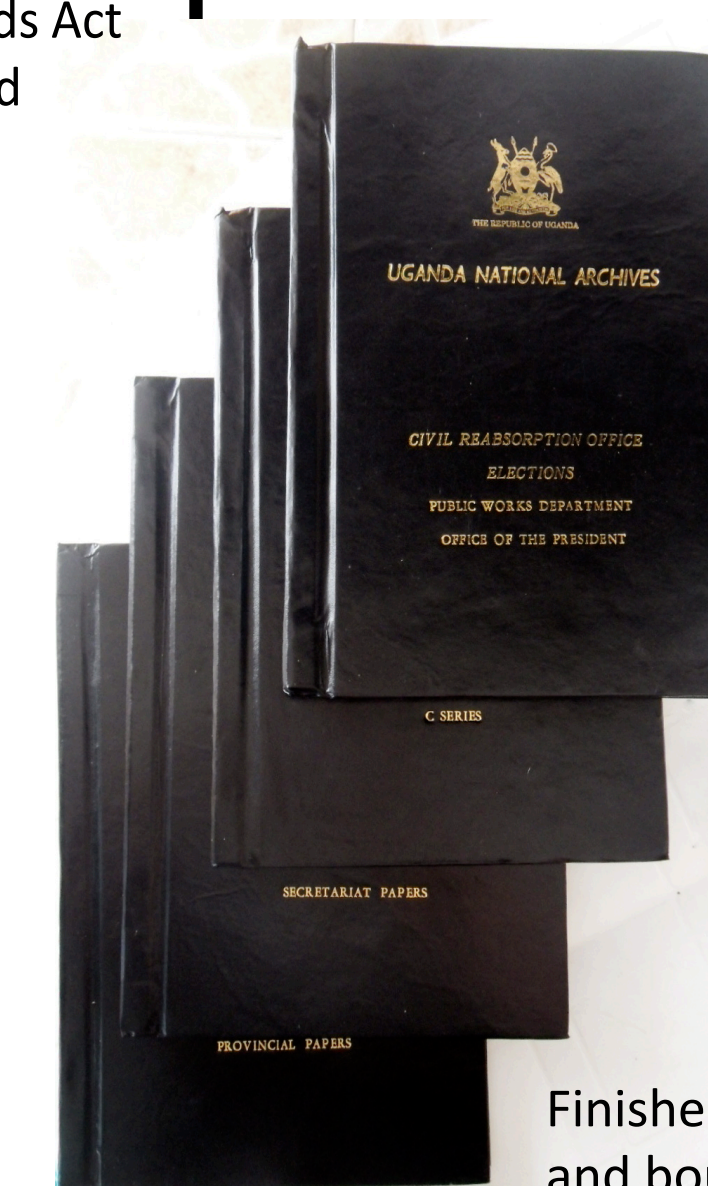
Uganda National Archives – Entebbe, Uganda

Project Scope: Cataloguing

The majority of Uganda's national archival material are housed in Entebbe, within the National Agricultural Research Organization's headquarters. The collections have been minimally processed throughout the past several decades, and our team—myself and four University of Michigan African History graduate students—was tasked with cataloguing them in their entirety.



UM graduate students Anneeth Hundle and Jennifer Johnson, hard at work in the reading room



Finished product: printed and bound versions of the catalogue

Methodology

- Assessment of physical collection
- Regular consultations with Okello Ajum, Government Archivist
- Assessment of previous organizational schema
- Outline for digital catalogue
- Creation of metadata spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel
- Basic preservation actions
- Processing at folder level; re-housing materials
- Formal & informal training sessions in basic archival practice
- Discussions with government officials re: development of archival education in Uganda

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